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Letters to the Editor of The Times

Aims of Opus Dei

To the Editor:

In his Nov. 29 column Herbert Matthews entirely misrepresents the activity of Opus Dei. This association of Catholic faithful aims to give spiritual formation to its members so that each one individually bears witness to Jesus Christ with the perfection of his work and the charity of his dealings with others; it also promotes and assumes responsibility for charitable and educational works. Such is the sum and substance of Opus Dei activity.

When Mr. Matthews states that "almost all its [Opus Dei] work is done by members acting as individuals, so that the association as such can disclaim direct involvement," he is sadly confusing the work of Opus Dei (solely that described above) with the personal professional activity of its members.

Freedom of Members

The aims of Opus Dei are exclusively spiritual and religious, as is the relationship between Opus Dei and its members. It disclaims any involvement in their secular activities, because there is none.

Opus Dei members, including the few who are active in politics for or against General Franco, are utterly free to think and act as they please. If Opus Dei were to promote any criterion in such matters (for example, to be "forward-

looking in economics" or "conservative in politics") its members would desert the association en masse.

Today it should not be difficult to understand that in his temporal endeavors the Catholic layman does not represent the Church or her institutions. It would be ironic if Opus Dei were accused of mixing in politics when in fact it makes a clear distinction between its own spiritual undertakings and the free professional and political activity of its members. In so doing this association is actually contributing valuable clarity to the distinction of temporal and spiritual matters.

Control Denied

In the light of the above it is impossible to maintain that Opus Dei controls any of the activities in which its members exercise their professional work, or that through these, Opus Dei exercises power. Opus Dei plainly is not interested in power.

Certainly there are members of Opus Dei among the intellectuals and the men of finance, but they are far outnumbered by those of more modest pursuits. In Madrid most members are to be found in the working-class quarter of Vallecas, where Opus Dei runs Tajamar, the huge social center.

It is surprising that Mr. Matthews still cherishes the notion that Opus Dei "works with a high degree of secrecy." There are countless publications which list the names and addresses of its directors and its activities. Members do not conceal the fact of belonging to Opus Dei. For example, in the October 1965 issue of Foreign Affairs Lopez Rodo clearly speaks about his membership.

Perhaps the most unusual commentary offered by Mr. Matthews is that the Vatican has "downgraded" Opus Dei to

the level of an association of Catholic faithful "without a word being printed."

The article "Evolution of Secular Institutes" in *Ius Canonicum* (Vol. IV, 1964) of the University of Navarre and *The Jurist* (April 1965) of the Catholic University of America fully explains that although its nature has not changed Opus Dei differs so much from the present concept of secular institutes that in fact it is not one.

The most appropriate term by which it can be designated is Association of the Catholic Faithful.

Far from downgrading Opus Dei, Pope Paul VI recently called the association a "living expression of the up-to-date character of the Church" and on Nov. 21 he personally inaugurated the International Center for Working Youth which Opus Dei conducts in the Trinitario quarter of Rome.

(Very Rev.) IGNATIUS GRAMUNT
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Washington, Nov. 30, 1965